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Chicago Tribune (1963-Current file); Dec 22, 1981; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Chicago Tribune
pg. A12

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By William Currie

MAYOR JANE BYRNE dedicated \$2.4 million in improvements to the international terminal at O'Hare International Airport Monday, calling it "an interim effort" in a 10-year, \$1 billion plan to refurbish the world's busiest airport.

The improvements, begun a year ago and completed four months early, expanded the baggage and Federal Inspection Service facilities in the small terminal, which has been seen by many as an embarrassment to the city in its efforts to expand foreign trade and to produce a World's Fair here in 1992.

"O'Hare Airport's international terminal has a key role in the economic and social vitality of the Chicago community," the mayor said.

"With more than 1 million foreign visitors to Chicago this year and projections for that figure to increase in the years ahead, these improvements demonstrate our commitment to make O'Hare...and the City of Chicago truly major fixtures in the worldwide transportation network."

UNTIL THE recent improvements were made, international travelers were forced to wait in customs, public health and immigration lines for up to two hours during the peak

international arrivals between 4 p.m. and 6 p.m.

Peter Gonzalez, district director of U.S. Customs, said the refurbished area provides 30 percent more customs space, cutting the time in half in which deplaning passengers must wait in the terminal at peak periods.

Thomas Kapsalis, city commissioner of aviation, took the mayor for a whirlwind tour of the improved facilities.

Kapsalis predicted that by next summer the city will complete plans for revamping the entire airport and restructuring the financing of the airport, a plan that would involve issuance of revenue bonds.

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